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A Hotchpotch of History: Sacred Trinity, Salford

In [Haunt](#)

The seventeenth instalment as part of an ongoing series for Haunt Manchester by Dr [Peter N. Lindfield](#) FSA, exploring Greater Manchester's Gothic architecture and hidden heritage. Peter's previous Haunt Manchester articles include features on [Ordsall Hall](#), [Albert's Schloss and Albert Hall](#), the Mancunian Gothic Sunday School of [St Matthew's](#), [Arlington House](#) in Salford, [Manchester's Modern Gothic in St Peter's Square](#), what was [St John's Church](#), [Manchester Cathedral](#), [The Great Hall at The University of Manchester](#), [St Chad's](#) in Rochdale and more. From the city's striking Gothic features to the more unusual aspects of buildings usually taken for granted and history hidden in plain sight, a variety of locations will be explored and visited over the course of 2020.

In this article he reflects on Sacred Trinity Church, Salford. At the time of writing (May 2020), the Church is currently closed due to Covid-19 guidance, with more information via its website [here](#). There is also a previous Haunt Manchester article featuring the monthly ArA night that takes place within the church (currently also not running, in terms of Covid-19 guidance) 'Behind the scenes of ArA: the gothic club-like night set in a Salford church' readable [here](#).

Pictured below: Sacred Trinity Church, side elevation. © Peter N. Lindfield.

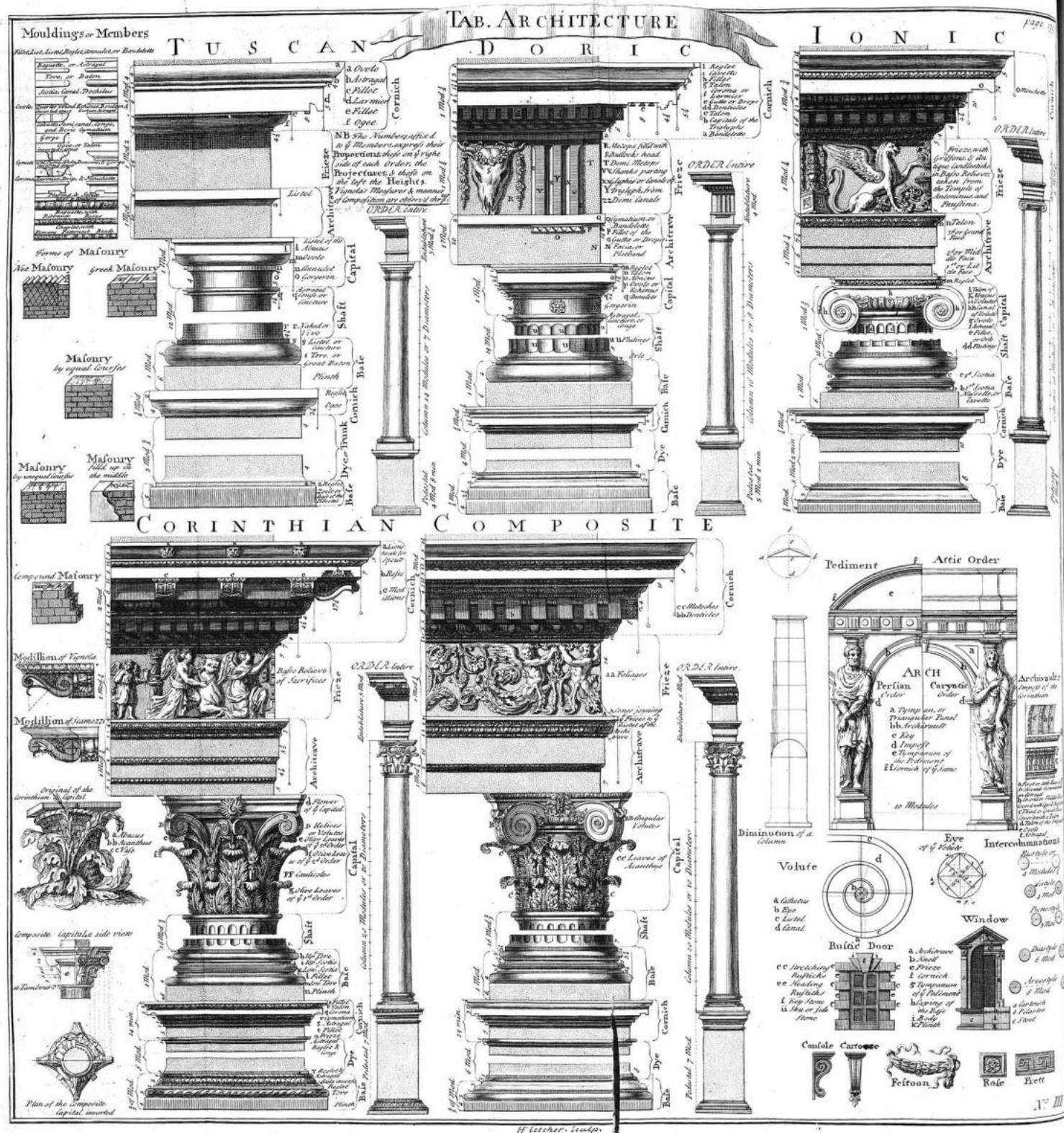


Dr Peter N. Lindfield FSA is a Senior Research Associate in the Departments of English and History at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has published widely on Georgian Gothic architecture and design broadly conceived, as well as heraldry and the relevance of heraldic arts to post-medieval English intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic culture. Last year, as part of Gothic Manchester Festival 2019, he co-organised an event at Chetham's Library Baronial Hall with Professor Dale Townshend titled 'Faking Gothic Furniture' (it also features, along with The John Rylands Library, in a previous article by Peter, [here](#)). This involved discussing the mysterious George Shaw (1810-76), a local Upper Mill lad who developed an early interest in medieval architecture and heraldry, going on to create forgeries of Tudor and Elizabethan furniture for a number of high-profile individuals and places at the time, including Chetham's!

Currently Peter is completing his Leverhulme-funded research project exploring forged antiquarian materials in Georgian Britain, and also working on the recently re-discovered Henry VII and Elizabeth of York marriage bed, which itself was the inspiration behind many of Shaw's so-called 'Gothic forgeries'.

A Hotchpotch of History: Sacred Trinity, Salford

The tower of Sacred Trinity is a marvellous survival from seventeenth-century England; only 11 listed structures in Salford, with a further thirteen in Manchester, laying claim to such an early date. This post explores the history of what is now a very curious building.



Above - Fig.1: Details of Classical orders from 1728. Image in Public Domain.

Architecture in eighteenth-century Britain was governed by the very fluffy concept of 'taste'. Trying to define taste is much like trying to define the nebulous concept of common sense. Nevertheless, Georgian England generally considered Classical architecture a good taste courtesy of its government by mathematics and the fact that it was taken from the great historic empires of Classical antiquity (Fig.1). Gothic architecture, on the other hand, came from the barbarian Goths. Not only did they destroy Classical architecture and the architects trained in the style, but also the Roman empire. Alexander Gerrard, a Church of Scotland minister, wrote and had published in 1759 probably the definitive exploration of taste in eighteenth-century Britain: *An Essay on Taste*, available [here](#) as a later and expanded edition.



Above - Fig.2: Elevation of St Paul's Cathedral, London. © Peter N. Lindfield.

Gerard argues that 'modern' architecture in eighteenth-century Britain ought to be Classical. As I explored in reference to Wren's St Paul's Cathedral in London (Fig.2), and St Philip's in Salford, [here](#), such advice followed, and helped cement Classical architecture's presence and popularity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain. Most 'modern' architects in Stuart and Georgian Britain, like Sir Christopher Wren, worked almost exclusively in the Classical mode, yet the vast amount of medieval Gothic architecture in Britain's landscape, such as churches, abbeys, castles, and colleges, meant that there remained a need to work with—repair or add to—medieval architecture.





Above - Fig.3: Tom Tower, Christ Church, Oxford. © Peter N. Lindfield.

Wren's most important piece of Gothic architecture is the entrance tower—known a Tom Tower—to Christ Church, Oxford, on St Aldate's Street. Left incomplete by both Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII, the tower needed finishing off. Rather than adding a Classical tower, Wren chose to erect a Gothic structure because it would sit happily with the rest of the college begun and constructed by Cardinal Wolsey (**Fig.3**).

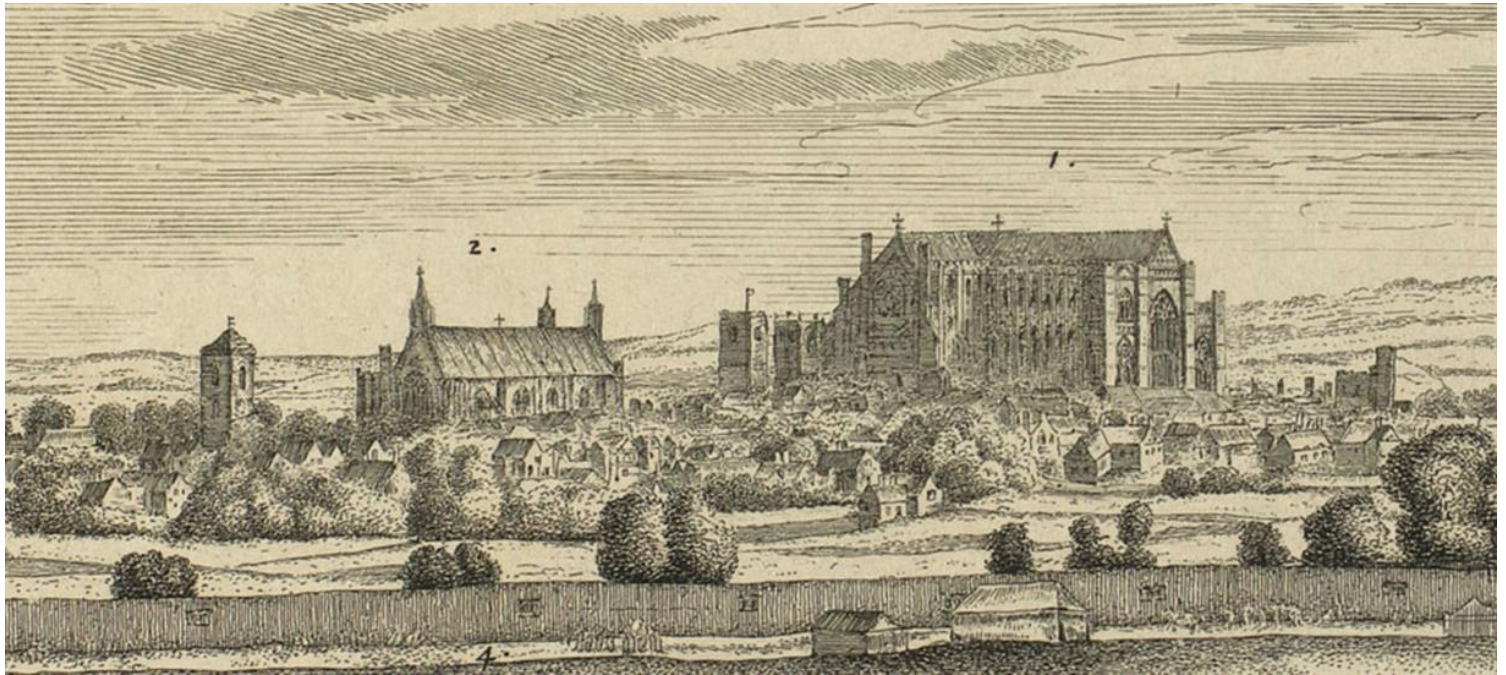
Below - Fig.4: Western Towers, Westminster Abbey, London. © Peter N. Lindfield.



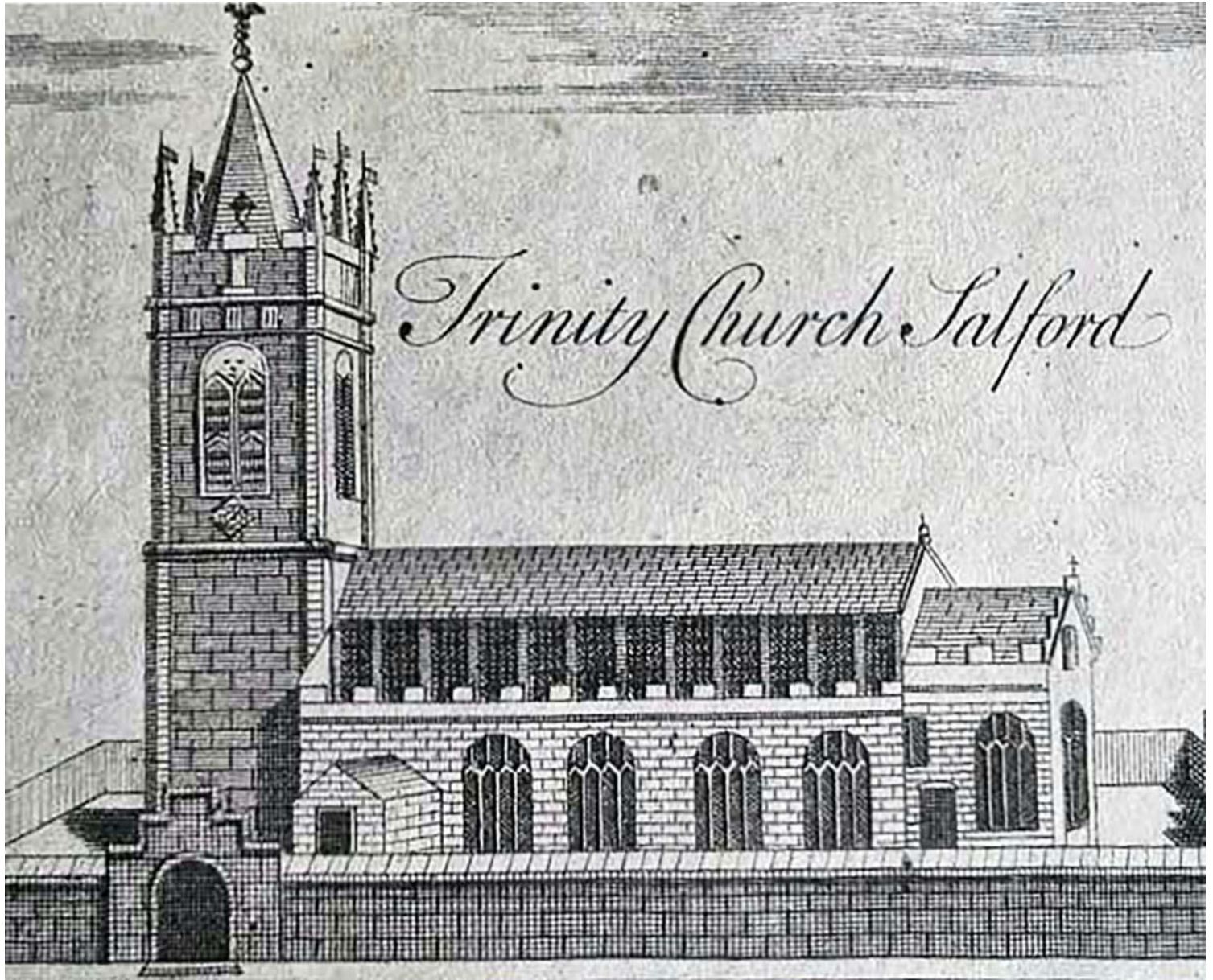


The same sense to tradition guided Nicholas Hawksmoor's work on Westminster Abbey in London. Hawksmoor, another architect working primarily in the Classical style, completed the western towers on the Abbey (**Fig.4**), which, until the eighteenth century, were only completed up to around the apex of the nave, see number 1 in **Fig.5**.

Below - Fig.5: After Hollar, St James's Palace and Part of the City of Westminster, taken from the north side of Pall Mall, (1660), published 1809. Image in Public Domain.



Whilst both Wren's and Hawksmoor's additions to Gothic fabrics are largely in a complementary Gothic style—even if they do include elements from Classical architecture—they can be considered sympathetic additions. Something quite different happened at Sacred Trinity Church in Salford.



Above - Fig.6: Sacred Trinity, from a map of Manchester and Salford from 1741. Image in Public Domain.

Built in 1635 in what Howard Colvin considered to be the 'Gothic survival style'—Gothic practised after the end of the medieval period by local builders—Sacred Trinity's form is preserved in engravings, such as **Fig.6**. As you can see from the engraving, not only is the tower ornamented with Gothic tracery windows, but the nave's windows are also in what appears to be the Perpendicular style typical of late-medieval churches.

Below - Fig.7: Sacred Trinity Church. © Peter N. Lindfield.





The tower (**Fig.7**) is the only obvious surviving part of the early seventeenth-century church, with the 'nave' that we see today erected in the Classical style. The church was restored subsequently between 1871 and 1874 by Holden. Grade II* listed by Historic England (list entry number 1386185, [here](#)), the tower is recorded as having Decorated windows in the listing, whereas, in reality, the tower's overwhelming character is Perpendicular Gothic (**Fig.8**).

Below - Fig.8: Sacred Trinity Church, detail of the tower. © Peter N. Lindfield.



The general form and appearance of Sacred Trinity's 1635 tower resonates with that belonging to Manchester Cathedral that we see today, however the Cathedral tower's later, Victorian, and fine Perpendicular Gothic ornament is not repeated on Sacred Trinity; this seventeenth-century Gothic tower is more spartan with less money invested in its carved detail.



Above - Fig.9: Sacred Trinity Church, side elevation. © Peter N. Lindfield.

What is curious about Sacred Trinity is the decision taken when the church was redeveloped in 1752: the Gothic tower was retained, but the nave was rebuilt in the Classical style. Note the use of round-headed windows instead of Gothic pointed examples (**Fig.9**). Something especially curious is that these windows' glazing bars are effectively Classicised versions of Gothic tracery.

Below - Fig.10: Sacred Trinity Church, eastern façade. © Peter N. Lindfield.



The end result is a wonderfully—or perhaps horribly—hybrid building retaining some elements of historic, seventeenth-century Gothic architecture, but the church, nevertheless, was remade in the then fashionable Classical style (**Fig.10**). Photographs of the church's Classical interior can be found [here](#)—the building is closed due to the present Covid-19 pandemic. As such, the church's appearance matches a satirical print from 1771 by Hooper (**Fig.11**), showing the effects of bad taste where a house is composed of elements from every style of architecture going. Despite this, Sacred Trinity is the manifestation of architectural fashions, and it responds to the Georgian period's interest in architectural style, aesthetics, taste, and, above all, the preservation of built heritage. Its extreme historical value comes from the fact that it records and preserves changes in English architectural history and fashion. The seventeenth-century tower's retention, perhaps out of a sense of heritage, out of financial economy, or a mixture of the two, which helped create this most curious church, thankfully helps preserve a glimpse of Manchester's and Salford's now almost entirely destroyed early architectural heritage.

Below - Fig.11: S. Hooper's 'A COMMON COUNCIL MAN of CANDLESTICK WARD and his WIFE on a Visit to Mr. DEPUTY at his Modern Built Villa Near CLAPHAM', 1771. 771.11.01.02+. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.



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By Dr Peter N. Lindfield

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